Dichmont

KOOTENAI BROWN'S WIDOW SPENDS LENGTHENING DAYS WITHIN THE PINES' SHADOW

(From Calgary Daily Herald, December 1, 1934.) by Betty Bletcher)

Traded for five good cayuses, a buxom Indian maiden of about 17 years of age becmme the property of one of the most colorful and best known historical characters of the west, Kootenai Brown, who later became the first superintendent of Waterton National Park. It is claimed he was its first white settler. Mrs. Brown, nearing the century mark, has outlived her white husband. In place of the Indian tepee of her girlhood she lives in a log cabin nestling in the pines at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains near Twin Butte.

Sparkling brown eyes of the dark skinned maiden have lost their youthful glow. In its place are slumvering dreams of what has been and hopes of what the future may hold. Her years with Kootenai Brown were happy.

The Indian maidne's figure was not one of the streamline variety so popular today. Redskins preferred stout squaws. They would bring twice as much as skinny girls. Only one pony would be given in exchange for an ugly squaw, and was not the handsome sum of five cayuses paid for "Chee-Nee-Pay-Tha-Quo-Ka-Soon" who became Mrs. Brown?

Our dashing Indian maiden has not lost her attractiveness. It is a different sort. Her wonderful old face is full of character, lined with the seasoning of life. Her straight black hair which flew freely in the chinook winds of early springs is now white as the snow-capped Rockies at her back door. It brings out the

attractiveness of her sun-tanned skin. Wrinkled hands, which provided hospitality which would challenge the best provided by any white woman, now clasp her time-worn and much-beloved pipe. It is one of the greatest comforts of her years as they fold in, bringing a great life to its close.

Feet that have never known shoes are still incased in moccasins, No longer able to jump into the saddle and ride the plains, keeping apace of the foremost riders, Mrs. Brown moves about with her stout old cane. She knows her steps are growing slower but her spirit hastens to join her white husband.

A member of the Cree tribe residing in Saskatchewan, this Indian maiden many years ago rode the prairie lands to visit relatives at Babb, Montana. After arrival there was talk of going over the mountains to trade with one Kootenai Brown at the famous "Dardanelles" trading post situated at what has become known as the famous Waterton National Park. In those days it was but a trading post.

Eyes aglow, the Indian maiden set off with the party packing over mountain trails. Upon arrival she instantly attracted the attention of John George Brown, soldier of fortune. He was born in Ireland, severed in the army in India, went to South America, and, to escape trouble, embarked for Canada. He eventually arrived at Waterton Lakes in 1869, traveling through the Kootenai Pass. Some say that is how he received his nickname, and others because of his ability to speak the language of the Kootenai Indians.

The Indian maiden was willing to be traded for the ponies. She was attracted to the big, good-looking white man and proud to become his squaw. An amusing part of the transaction was that Kootenai later gave the Indians drink from a flask disguised as the "Holy Bible" and when they became sufficiently intoxicated he staged some races, winning back the ponies. He kept these as well as the squaw.

Life was full of adventure and romance for the girl. Two children were born but neither survived, owing to improper nourishment. At this time the Browns lived at the mouth of Pass Creek on Kootenai's homestead. Here, today, one may see Kootenai's grave, a shrine to which Mrs. Brown makes a yearly pilgrimage. What her thoughts are no one knows. She weeps copiously for hours, then returns to resume her sheltered life under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Reviere, breeds, the former a descendent of the French aristocracy.

In youth Mrs. Brown was the eny of many an Indian maiden. Kootenai dressed her in silks. Rings adorned her fingers. He treated her with every respect, calling her "Nitchimouse", Indian for "My good woman." In speaking of her to other Kootenai called her "Mrs. Brown", for such she eventually became, with Father Lacombe performing the ceremony.

Although an immaculate housekeeper, Mrs. Brown could not bake bread. In its place she served hot biscuits and was willing to share all the y had with friends. Her disposition is a kindly one. Mrs. Brown, fearful people would make fun of her, has never attempted to speak English. She pretends not to understand what

is said to her in that tongue but a twinkling of understanding gleams for those who know and love her.

"Someday you will see men fly like birds", Kootenai forecast to her many years ago and now, when she hears the throb of planes across the mountain peaks, it seems like the voice of her husband reiterating promises of reunion after death.

After they had been living together some years Mr. Brown brought a white girl to their home. He had become infatuated with her pretty face. Mrs. Brown would stand no such intrusion. While they were absent from the house she hitched up the old wagon, piled in all the furniture and groceries and retraced her weary journey to Babb. Kootenai followed immediately. After much persuasion and many promises Mrs. Brown returned to the homestead. It was the only break in their otherwise happy life. Prior to marriage to the Indian maiden Kootenai had been wedded to a French halfbreed girl who died.

In 1916 death robbed Mrs. Brown of her partner. Kootenai went to the happy hunting ground. In accordance with his wishes he is buried in a spot he always called paradise, the setting of his homestead at the head of Pass Creek. It is also the future resting place of Mrs. Brown.

The government provides for Kootenai's widow. She passes her days in idleness. Eating, drinking, and smoking are her pleasures. Her eyesight is dimmed. The good people with whom she lives a talk and read to her in a language she understands. She does not care to see people. Only those whom she knew in the early

are made welcome. She abhors those who attempt to take pictures of her, and only closest friends are given permission to do so.

"Nitchimouse" waits the call from the other world. She has been granted permission by the Dominion government to be buried with full Indian rites. Life has been good, but the passing of Kootenai has left a void that only death can fill. She awaits her next adventure.

Material sent by Mrs. Dichmont, Calgary.